*Wok & Roll by Peter Kwong, (Frederic) Inter-County Leader*

**Stressed out or can’t focus? Try a finger labyrinth**

My wife can do many things, but thank goodness that cooking is not her forte, otherwise she wouldn’t need me to hang around.

It is amazing that while she is busy creating her artwork, she still finds time to work as a part-time pastor in Cochrane, a small town by the Mississippi River two hours south of our home. On top of that, to spend time with the grandkids. Somehow, she can always find things that they are interested in, and spends hours keeping them entertained and occupied. It must be a gift to be able to stay focused.

Me, on the other hand, I can’t stay focused and sit still for a long period of time (well, 15 minutes is a long, long time to me). In a restaurant sense, it is called multitasking, which is a good thing. Being able to multitask means that I am capable of melting the butter in the saucepan while making sure that the soup stock does not boil over and chop up the herbs for garnish; also, on top of that, be able to keep an eye on whatever is cooking in the oven.

That’s the reason why I don’t let my wife in the kitchen; and I will never intrude on her when she is working in her studio. I can’t imagine myself sitting in front of a glob of clay for hours. However, to crank out three entrees in an hour is a piece of cake. One entree will be steamed, one baked and another deep-fried — all with different sauces. Now I am bragging, ha-ha.

But it does drive me crazy when I asked Colleen to help me in the kitchen (once, a long time ago). While she was melting some butter on the stove, I asked her to get me some sugar from the cupboard for me. Guess what she told me? “I can’t, I am watching the butter.” I’ll say no more, as I love her dearly. Love is more than melting butter on the stove and getting a cup of sugar from the cupboard, no!?

Colleen’s pottery business has been picking up a lot since the pandemic, surprisingly. Even though all the trade shows have been canceled, her online orders (spirit-of-creation.com) increased immensely. It is amazing that buyers from all over the world order her products. But in a sense, I am not surprised, as her products are handmade and have a spiritual theme or usage.

Being a pastor herself, she knows what is available in the market for daily use. However, when those products were not available, she would decide to create a design and make her own. Folks would purchase her paintings and jewelry because they are one of a kind, and she can create any designs as requested. She designed her Traveling Communion Set for pastors to use in a person’s home because one time she had problems gathering all the supplies — the dish, the cup and the oil for anointing. I’ve helped her in many trade shows and have always been amazed at how she would sell out those sets every time.

Once she read something about labyrinths and decided to create her own model. I didn’t see her for a few days. Actually, I did, when she came in the house for lunch and for dinner. Then one day, with a big grin, she showed me her creation. It was a “finger labyrinth,” she said. It is a disclike porcelain plate with grooves that one can run a finger around. It is interesting, I told myself, but I didn’t pay much attention then.

Then one day, out of curiosity, I asked her to show me how to work this finger labyrinth, just for fun. She took out a handmade cloth bag (yes, she can sew too) and took out a model, and looked at me seriously and said, “We are all on the path … exactly where we need to be; this finger labyrinth is a model of that path.” Judging by her look, I dared not crack a joke, or try to say something funny. “Carry on,” I said. Now, being inquisitive, I probed for more answers.

First, she tried to explain to me just what is a labyrinth. There are many labyrinths that already existed across the globe, made of varied materials, and span thousands of years. Images of labyrinths have been found on objects made 3,000 years ago, throughout history and are being created in sacred settings today. One can find turf labyrinths in England which are 40 feet across, a stone mosaic labyrinth in the floor of Chartres Cathedral, and small garden labyrinths in parks and churchyards in many communities.

She kept on explaining that a finger labyrinth can help to calm a person who is anxious, or those who have trouble focusing (I don’t know why, but she looked at me and smiled when she said that). It provides an activity that engages the senses, allowing the person to focus their mind and spirit.

“So, with all these grooves circling around, where to start?” I cautiously asked.

“Well, it depends on what your body and mind desired. If you desire energy, then place your finger in the groove in the middle of the labyrinth, and slowly trace the path toward the ‘mouth,’ or outside edge of the labyrinth. If you desire calming, then start at the mouth and trace toward the middle. However, if balance is desired, then start at the mouth, trace to the middle, then trace back to the mouth. The finger labyrinth provides a labyrinth experience when walking a labyrinth is not possible.”

Then I remembered something Caroline Joy Adams wrote some time ago: “Your life is a sacred journey. And it is about change, growth, discovery, movement, transformation, continuously expanding your vision of what is possible, stretching your soul, learning to see clearly and deeply, listening to your intuition, taking courageous challenges at every step along the way. You are on the path … exactly where you are meant to be right now … And from here, you can only go forward, shaping your life story into a magnificent tale of triumph, of healing, of courage, of beauty, of wisdom, of power, of dignity and of love.”

Maybe in life, we need more than just to be able to multitask? Goodness, just when I thought I knew everything!